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Train Faculty to Create Amazing Course Videos

39 Strategies from Colleges across the Country

Introduction

As online and blended learning continue to gain prominence, it's more important than ever to make sure instructors know how to create quality online course content.

To connect with students across distance and digital devices, instructors need ways to humanize online content beyond text-based interactions. Video is an ideal way to keep the human element in online courses, adding crucial personalization that increases instructor presence, builds stronger instructor-student relationships, and promotes greater student engagement.

Faculty new to video need guidance on how to use new technology, preferably in ways that intuitively support their teaching. Instructors seek ways to connect with students online, and how to get comfortable with recording their own voice. And everyone - even tech-savvy instructors who have been creating video for years - look for direction on best practices to make their online courses engaging learning environments for students.

Increasing quality and ADA accessibility standards for online course content is another reason it's imperative that faculty follow guidelines on how to produce compelling online course content that reaches all learners.

Training faculty to do this, however, can be challenging. It can often involve overcoming barriers in technology, workflow, student-instructor relationships, and mindset. In this ebook, you'll learn ways to train faculty to create quality online courses, with tips from other colleges and universities on what has worked for them, including how to:

- Get instructors to use new software
- Offer effective training that doesn't interfere with teaching
- Encourage faculty to get used to the sound of their own voice on video
- Guide faculty to create content that is engaging and effective
- Measure the quality of online course content
- Select video elements you can train faculty to include in quality online courses

★ **Bonus: Include accessibility elements for ADA compliance**

How to Train Faculty to Use New Video Software

With numerous schedule and research obligations, it can be tough to motivate instructors to learn yet another new software tool, especially for those who are reluctant to use new technology. However, it can be done, with the right approach.

✓ Provide readable and *watchable* instructions (plus FAQs)

Take the time to create clear, written directions, with high-quality screenshots that show faculty where to click for each step. Including screenshots is key. According to new research by behavioral economist Dr. Alastair Goode, two-thirds (67%) of employees are better at completing tasks when information includes text with images (screenshots) or video than by text alone. Clear visual instructions are particularly essential when training faculty on new software, showing which links to click, buttons to press, and how to navigate the process.

Written directions should be easy for faculty to find, ideally in the vicinity of where they will find their video resources. Many staff prefer to find written answers on their own, at their own convenience. It's a great reference for later when they need to refresh knowledge on a specific aspect of the process.

Make video instructions, too. Many faculty find watching a video easier than reading through written instructions. Seeing someone walk through the steps makes the process much more approachable. Seeing the workflow in action also helps faculty understand exactly what to click on, and reduces the fear of how much time is involved (usually, it's much less than they think!) to record and share video. You can record a series of concise videos that cover each segment of the process, such as how to login, what to do before you record, how to start your recording, etc. Recording the information by topic makes the information more digestible, and also serves as a knowledge base. It's easy to go back and re-play a section they need to see again.

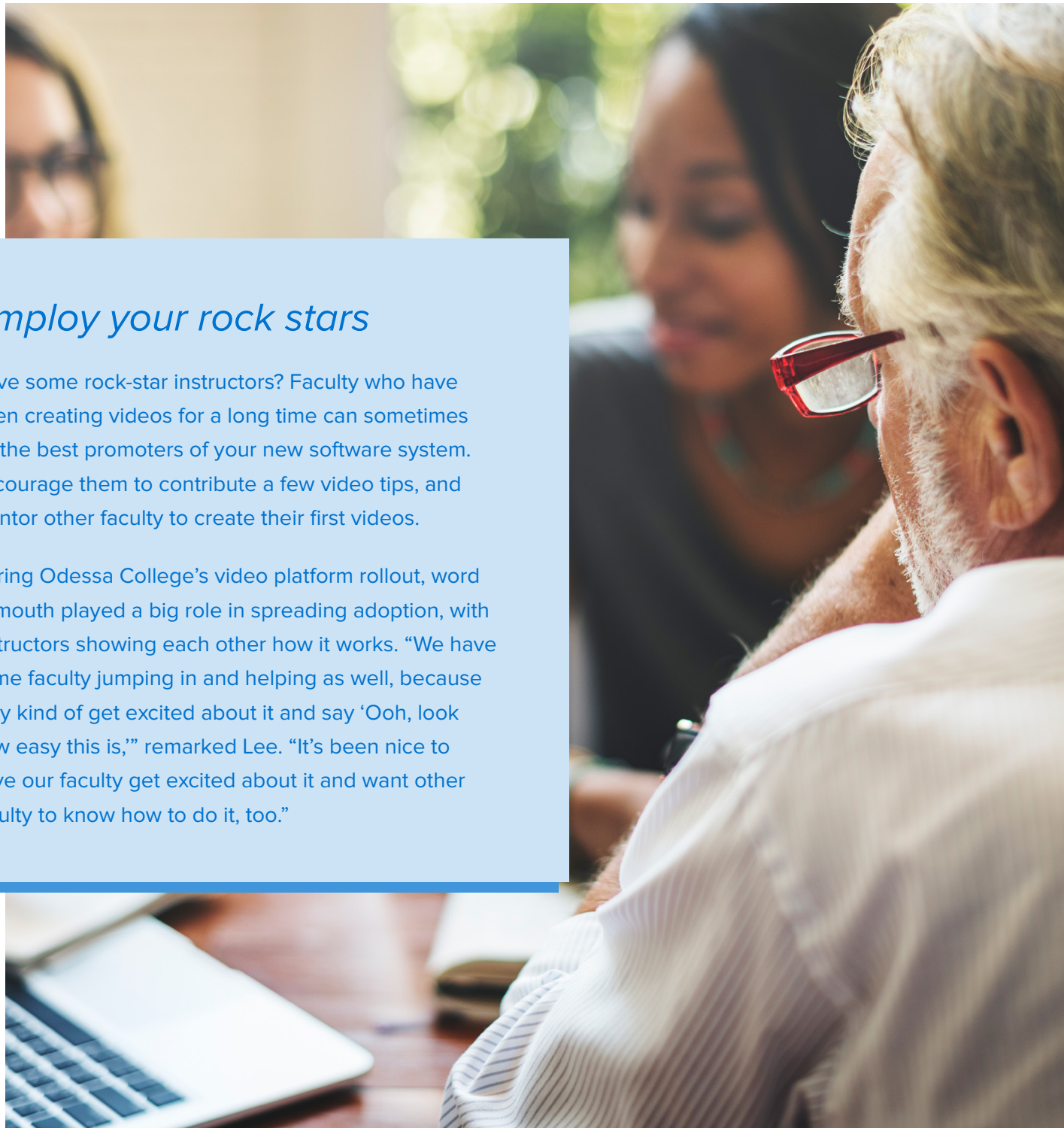
Make training relatable with webcam

Include your face from your webcam when recording training videos. Your tutorials will feel more personalized and will be more interesting to watch. Researchers from MIT and the University of Rochester found people pay more attention to videos with a 'talking head.' Not only do videos feel more personalized when they include a face, but they can also help to better convey information when faculty can see the trainer's facial expressions and see their gestures. Insert webcam footage as picture-in-picture, or toggle between the webcam and screen when demonstrating steps.

In addition to making your training videos more effective, you also set a good example for faculty to follow when you include webcam footage. You are encouraging them by example to include webcams in their own course videos for students.

Video training is also a great way to reach out-of-town instructors. "Many of our adjuncts aren't local in Odessa, they are all over the United States," explained Jennifer Lee, Web Design and Instructional Technology Specialist at Odessa College. "It's easier to reach adjuncts with video – record workshops and put them in BlackBoard."

When you're done, gather video training into a 'course' in your LMS or other easily-accessible location, so it's simple for faculty to find all the videos they need, in one place. Having them in a central location will also help instructors keep track of videos they've watched and have yet to watch, and to come back and re-learn material that needs refreshing.

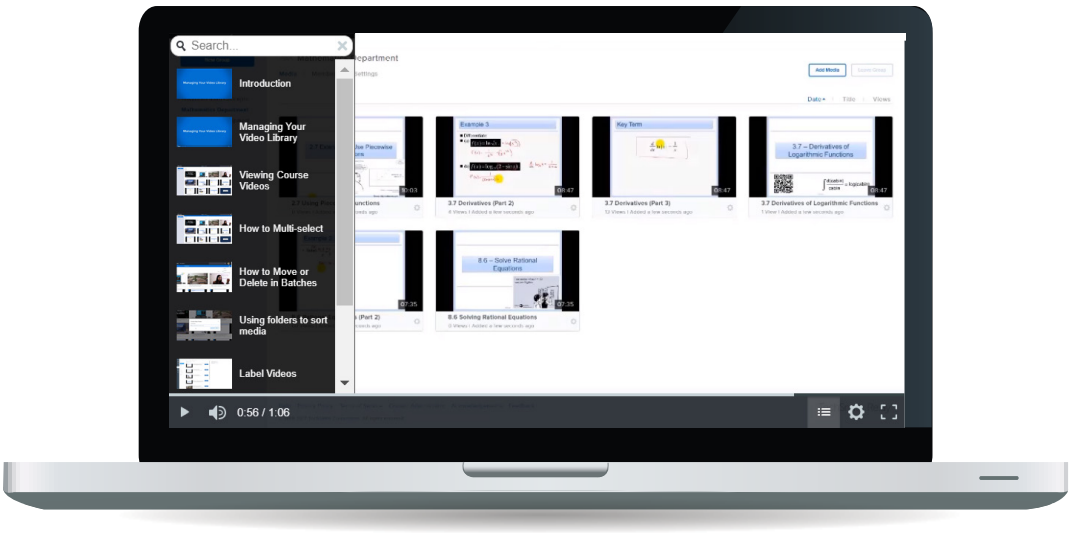


Employ your rock stars

Have some rock-star instructors? Faculty who have been creating videos for a long time can sometimes be the best promoters of your new software system. Encourage them to contribute a few video tips, and mentor other faculty to create their first videos.

During Odessa College's video platform rollout, word of mouth played a big role in spreading adoption, with instructors showing each other how it works. "We have some faculty jumping in and helping as well, because they kind of get excited about it and say 'Ooh, look how easy this is,'" remarked Lee. "It's been nice to have our faculty get excited about it and want other faculty to know how to do it, too."

It's a good idea to include frequently asked questions (often missing from documentation). This will let instructors get answers right away without having to ask someone, or feel like they have to 'dig' for information. Include a table of contents as well, so faculty can quickly click through topics to watch or re-learn content.



Including a table of contents lets people easily jump to a specific topic.

✓ Explain the *entire* workflow across tools (not just each separate tool)

One of the most common errors when training instructors is showing faculty how to use each digital tool, but neglecting to explain the overall workflow across all tools.

For example, staff has instructions on how to record videos, but they get stuck when trying to take the next step. Once they record their video, what file type should they save it in, so it's an acceptable file format for the LMS? How do they go back and make changes once a video is saved? Once the video is in the LMS, what software system do they use to notify their students that the video is available? Where can they find quiz results - the LMS, their video platform, or another system? These types of workflow questions can impede faculty from creating video.

Make sure to include enough instructions about every step along the way, instead of only instructions for each individual software program.


Photo courtesy of Boise State University

Work with what you have (but plan to get integrated video)

It's worth saying that one of the keys to successful training is to start with a video platform that is easy to use in the first place. Clunky legacy platforms discourage usage. Patched-together video tools that require redundant logins are time-prohibitive. If at all possible, make it a priority to choose a video platform that integrates seamlessly with your LMS. Being able to create and view videos within the system faculty already use is one of the single biggest things you can do to increase faculty adoption.

At the University of Colorado Denver, administrators rolled out a new lecture capture system, but didn't see broad adoption until they made the platform work with their LMS, including single-sign-on. "It wasn't until we installed the LTI integration into all of our Canvas courses that faculty usage really took off," explained Alex Karklins, CU Online Academic Services Senior Professional. "Having seamless access to their [video] libraries from within the LMS makes it very easy for faculty to incorporate video into their courses."

Before transitioning from legacy, hardware-based lecture capture, Boise State University had a similar experience. Staff spent a lot of time training faculty how to create and share lectures. Since moving to an easier-to-use software-based system, staff noticed the simpler interface didn't require as much onboarding or ongoing training. "Typically, one session is all they need, and they're off to the races," explained Jack Vant, Instructional Technologist, Office of Information Technology. "When I show new people who don't even understand it, they say 'That's all?"

Using laptops and computers instructors already had was another factor that made training easier, as well as being able to offer the same recorder in every classroom, with start and stop times that instructors could easily control. Even instructors who weren't technically-inclined had success with the training, and began making videos. "I found it to be a seamless process," said Jeff Anderson, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Education, Department of Respiratory Care. "Even for me, a pencil-and-paper technophobe, I found it works very well. TechSmith Relay is by far the easiest product out there for me as an instructor."

Usage jumped right away, with nearly 300 faculty getting on board in the first few weeks, and a six times greater adoption rate at full rollout.

✓ Host hands-on workshops with select departments (instead of huge trainings)

While large training sessions often don't work, medium-sized sessions offer what they lack - enough camaraderie to be fun yet enough anonymity to not be intimidating.

Skip the all-university invites. Instead, train select groups at a time. By training faculty by department, unit, or other work-related group, you offer them the chance to learn in a familiar setting with people they know (as opposed to a huge group of people from all departments who they may not know very well). This is especially helpful for staff who are uncomfortable with technology and prefer the community aspect of learning things together. It gives instructors the opportunity to try the tools themselves, ask questions, hear questions from coworkers (which often clarify their own understanding), and get the answers all at once.

"We found that some users who were uncomfortable using new technology were a little more open to trying it if they had friends/coworkers who were also going to be trying it."

— Jennifer Lee, Web Design and Instructional Technology Specialist, Odessa College

Another big advantage of training faculty in select groups is that departments often use different software programs, and may have various integrations that affect how they use video software. Capture methods may work best for some departments over others for their subject matter, such as a nursing program that uses smartphones to capture practical instruction, before uploading videos to their LMS. Knowing this, you can make sure training is presented in a way that makes the most sense for each department, for the most effective and relevant onboarding.

Training by group is an especially good method when rolling out a new system across campus, as well as onboarding new faculty at the beginning of a new term. It lets you train many instructors at once, demonstrate the software, and answer any questions. In a large-scale onboarding situation, this method (plus easily-accessible written and watchable instructions) is often all many faculty need to successfully learn a new video solution.

The hands-on aspect is key. Faculty will learn much more quickly when they can actually try the tools themselves, as compared with passive “sit-and-get” workshops.

Where do I host training?

You want faculty to experience their particular video creation workflow the way it will be after classroom-style training is over. Make sure to provide as authentic an environment as possible, to replicate what they’ll need to do on their own. If they will need to access an internal network (or other department-specific technology software or system) to save or share files, make sure they have this in the training room.

Computer labs are great for this. Some colleges have dedicated recording areas, while others have flexible, software-based video solutions. If you have the latter, faculty can usually use their laptop or any computer with an internet connection to create videos and share in the cloud.

✓ Don’t forget about remote instructors

Not surprisingly, the rise in online and distance learning is mirrored by an increase in remote instructors, all who need to be trained on new video software. Plan to deliver an online-only version of training to this group. Record a hands-on workshop session and include it along with written and watchable instructions, as the core training package.

Give your remote adjuncts clear, easy ways to contact you with questions. When they need assistance, record just-in-time video responses to their questions, and share with the entire remote group. By sharing answers with the group, other faculty will benefit (who likely have the same or similar questions). Video response is often better than a simple text-based email because you can show your screen, so faculty know exactly where to click, what buttons to press, and can see the process in action.

Out-of-state, adjuncts, or hard-to-reach faculty

Online-only training resources are great for any other faculty who find it difficult to attend on-campus training. Web-based training is also great for faculty who want to go back and re-watch training at a later time.

✓ One-on-one, case-by-case

Despite offering the above methods of training catering to different learning styles, you can count on a smaller percentage of staff who still need one-on-one assistance. Plan for this ahead of time - budget the time and resources to meet with these professors informally, in a face-to-face setting and answer their specific questions.

Technology training challenges

When they're scared - Some instructors, especially those who tend to struggle with learning new technology systems, feel more comfortable asking questions in person. Administrators at Odessa College also offer these personalized training sessions as a final approach to onboarding. "These sessions are usually short and focused, but the faculty seem to find them very helpful." They notice that technology confidence often plays a big part in getting these instructors on board. Once they are walked through the process and see how easy it is, they get the hang of it much more quickly.

> **"For many of them, once we show them how easy it is to create that first video, it boosted their confidence a great deal (and even got them excited). They started doing more and more on their own with less guidance from us."**
>
> *— Jennifer Lee, Web Design and Instructional Technology Specialist, Odessa College*

This is another way to get your rock-star instructors involved - encourage them to help strugglers. Often, they can answer their questions and make them feel at ease even more quickly than formal training staff.

When they just don't want to - Some instructors philosophically resist new technology. This is usually the most challenging set to turn around, however, they are usually a small group.

Do your best to offer them all the resources you can. One-on-one training can be very useful for this group. Provide specific reasons why online courses will benefit their department and them, professionally and personally. Show examples of how other professors have created online courses, as inspiration.

Remind them that instructors are the most important part of the online course - technology doesn't replace professors, it amplifies their importance.

Leif Nelson, Director of Learning Technology Solutions at Boise State University, has extensive experience onboarding and training faculty on lecture capture systems, and explains that it doesn't always happen all at once. "There's definitely a step approach to get people used to what's possible with technology."

No matter what, keep encouraging them. Sometimes the best progress happens slowly.

Combining all the approaches above gives faculty choice in how they want to learn video software, so they can choose the method that best supports their learning style. You can apply the same training techniques to other software and hardware that faculty need to create online courses.

How to Train Faculty to Build a Quality Online Presence

Now that faculty know how to use the technology-side of things, it's time to tackle the next step - share the elements they'll need to build engaging online courses.

An online course, done right, is a dynamic place where instructors actively engage with students to the same degree - or more - than they do in a traditional classroom.

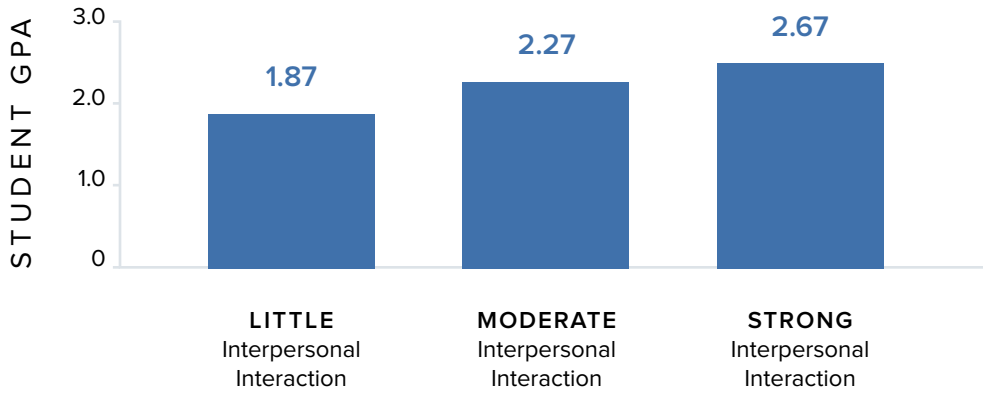
Crucial to this is encouraging faculty to adopt a positive mindset about the role of online instruction. An online course is not just a place for students to peruse digital resources, or watch hour-long lectures. It's definitely not a begrudging, passive alternative to a face-to-face class. An online course, done right, is a dynamic place where instructors actively engage with students to the same degree - or more - than they do in a traditional classroom.

Students appreciate the flexibility and learning options offered with online and blended learning. According to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Research Center, students increasingly choose online and blended learning (a 5% increase annually), while fewer are taking on-campus-only courses. Overall, 28% of college students take some or all of their courses online, with 12% taking all of their courses online.

With the right course elements, instructors can interact with online students, be attuned to their questions, and give personalized feedback, all while measuring participation and comprehension. Building a quality online presence is vital groundwork for a great course. Keeping a human element in their instruction can make all the difference in whether students complete the course, and how well they learn.

In a study examining online course outcomes, Community College Research Center (CCRC) researchers found that instructors who built a strong online presence saw students complete their course with nearly a full grade higher than students in low-interaction courses. In fact, among the 23 online courses CCRC rated, interpersonal interaction was the most important factor in student outcomes.

Relationship Between Level of Interpersonal Interaction and Student Performance



Source: Creating an Effective Online Instructor Presence, Community College Research Center

Benefits for instructors and students

Instructors typically find that creating videos is an excellent investment of their time and energy, since they can re-use topic videos from one semester to the next, and in multiple sections of the same course. Faculty regularly see improved student performance, as well as less student anxiety.

Tracy Schaelen has experience training faculty throughout California as an instructor and trainer for @ONE, has been involved in the California Community Colleges Online Education Initiative as a lead course reviewer, and is now Distance Education Faculty Coordinator at Southwestern College. She notes that in some online learning programs, all discourse is via text - email, discussion forums, and other impersonal, written-only format. Providing a personalized aspect to online courses makes a big difference to course outcomes and morale. “Imagine,” remarked Tracy, ”how it feels to enter an online course and find a video of a moving, talking, smiling human being welcoming students to the class.”

“Imagine how it feels to enter an online course and find a video of a moving, talking, smiling human being welcoming students to the class.”

— Tracy Schaelen, Distance Education Faculty Coordinator, Southwestern College

With a goal of increasing instructor-student engagement, administrators at Odessa College require online instructors to include personalized video elements in their courses. They’ve found it not only helps build trust, but also improves student outcomes. Students feel that they can reach out, if they need to. “We want them to know that there’s actually another person on the other side of the screen,” explained Lee. Flexible recording options let faculty capture video messages any time, on their smartphone at home, or when they’re checking email from anywhere.

Below are some time-tested elements you can guide faculty to include when they begin creating their online courses.

✓ Intro video

The first thing you can encourage faculty to create after getting their course set up in the LMS or other hosting location is a video to welcome students to the course. In this video, faculty can introduce themselves, talk about goals for the course, and share a bit about themselves. This lets students get to know them right away. Instructors often like to share this video as soon as possible, so it's the first thing students see in their online course.

Tracy Schaelen, Distance Education Faculty Coordinator, Southwestern College, uses Camtasia to create a basic welcome video to share with all her online students.

✓ Course navigation video

The next thing you can encourage faculty to create is a course navigation video, sometimes known as a course tour video. In this video, faculty can show students how to navigate the course and address common concerns such as 'Where do you go to find the syllabus?', 'How do I submit an assignment in the LMS?', and 'Where is the lab schedule?'

"For a student who has never taken an online course before, and is really afraid - asking things like 'I don't know where my assignments are, where to find my grades' – we ask the instructor to do a quick little walk-through of the course," said Lee. Students will appreciate the personalized 'grand tour,' and instructors will notice fewer repetitive questions being asked about course logistics.

You can also have instructors explain the best way to reach them, and their office hours (virtual or in person).

One Odessa College nursing instructor found that recording on her smartphone was the easiest way to help her blended learning students when they had trouble locating her on campus. "She said: 'Students can't find my office. Let me walk you to it,'" explained Shawn Shreves, VP of Information Technology, Odessa College. The instructor created a quick mobile recording that walked students through the labyrinth of office hallways to get to her door. "It was different, but people loved it because it showed she's a real person," Shreves said. "It made it personal."

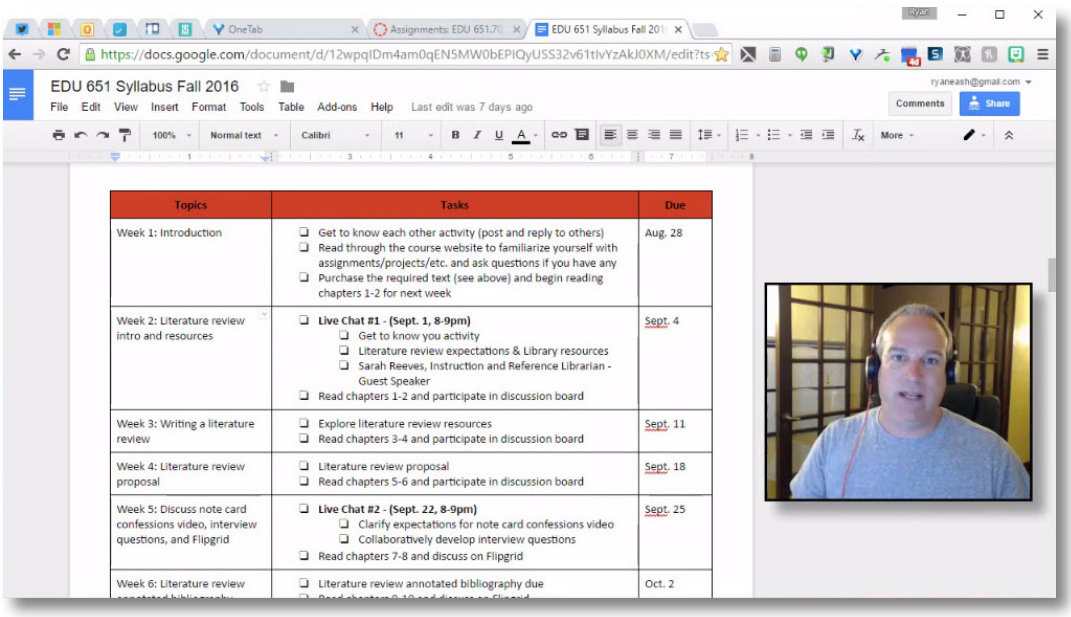
Provide flexible recording options

Software-based, web-based, and mobile video solutions let instructors record video from virtually any device, any time. This is a big advantage, as instructors can record at their desk in their own office, or from the comfort of their home.

You can also try providing faculty a designated recording room - a small, quiet space with a laptop, microphone, and "Shhh...Recording in Progress" door sign, where they can create video lessons with no distractions. Some instructors do very well when they have this resource available.

✓ New week, topic, or unit video

This video is a great way faculty can show students they're actively engaged in online instruction. Faculty can share their excitement about what's coming up regarding assignments and themes, so students know what to expect for the unit or week, and feel connected. It sets the right tone for a humanized online course, and starts building a personal connection, from the beginning.



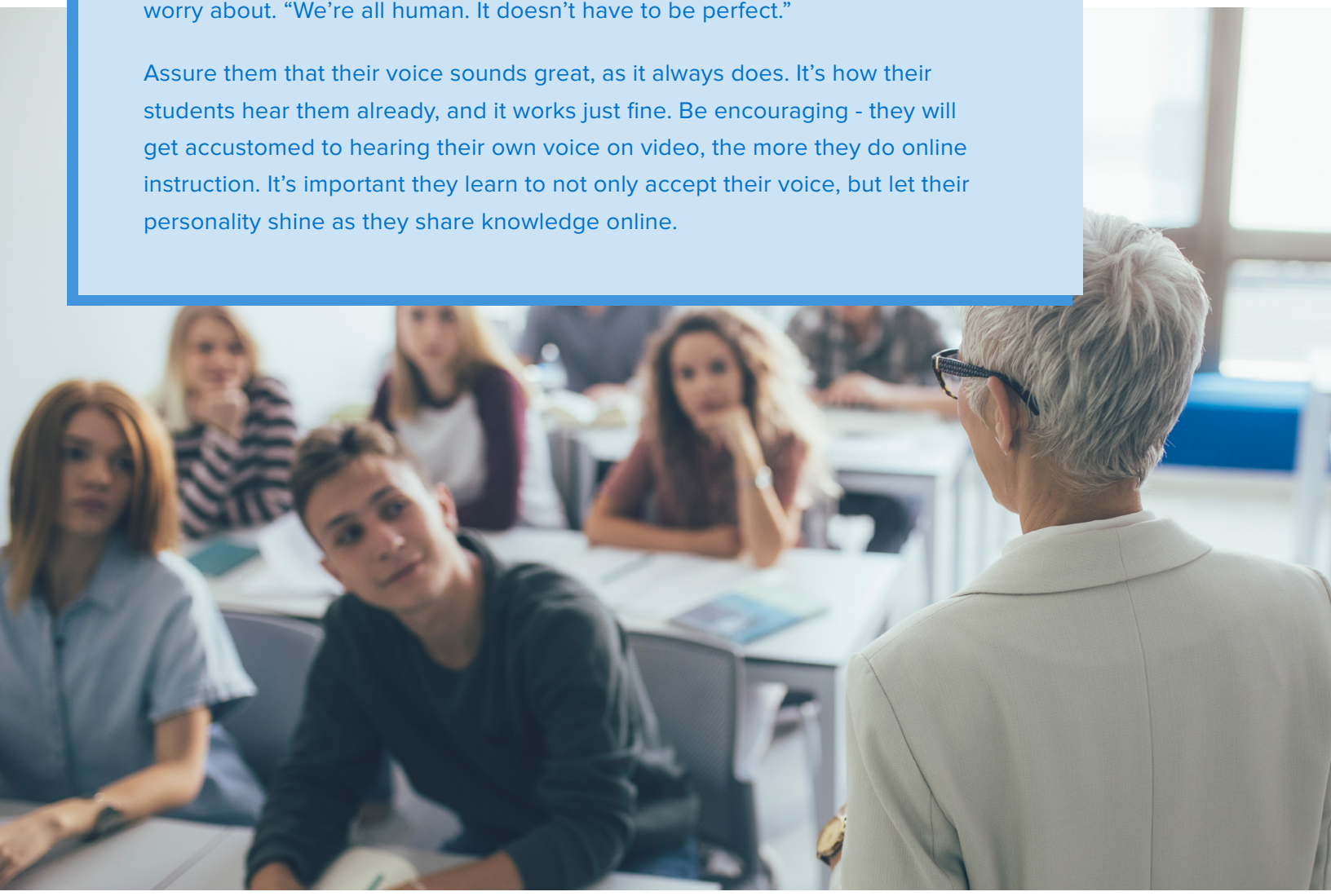
Ryan Eash, adjunct at Lenoir-Rhyne University, introduces week two of his EDU 651 online course, walking students through what to expect.

“Yeah, but...I hate the sound of my own voice”

Not being comfortable with their own voice is a common complaint you may hear while training faculty to create videos. Although they have no problem with the sound of their voice in day-to-day conversation, they often complain about it when played back through a speaker. Scientifically, this happens because we hear our own voice differently through the bones of our head vs when it’s played back from an external source.

When Stephanie Entringer began recording videos for her Registered Nursing course at Southeast Technical University, she was hesitant. “When I was new, video freaked me out. No-one likes to hear themselves.” Soon, with practice, she began to realize that her voice is part of what helps build a unique relationship with her online students, and any perceived imperfections weren’t anything to worry about. “We’re all human. It doesn’t have to be perfect.”

Assure them that their voice sounds great, as it always does. It’s how their students hear them already, and it works just fine. Be encouraging - they will get accustomed to hearing their own voice on video, the more they do online instruction. It’s important they learn to not only accept their voice, but let their personality shine as they share knowledge online.



✓ Walk through documents

In addition to uploading core course documents (assignments, etc.), direct instructors to create personalized 'explainer' videos to go along with them. These videos are a great way for faculty to personally talk through each item. Students will love seeing their professors explain each piece, hear their tone of voice, and see their facial expressions.

Explainer videos don't have to be planned-out, formal videos. They actually work best as informal, ad-hoc clips. As long as they are frequent and personable, they go a long way to keeping students engaged in online courses. Instructors can walk students through:

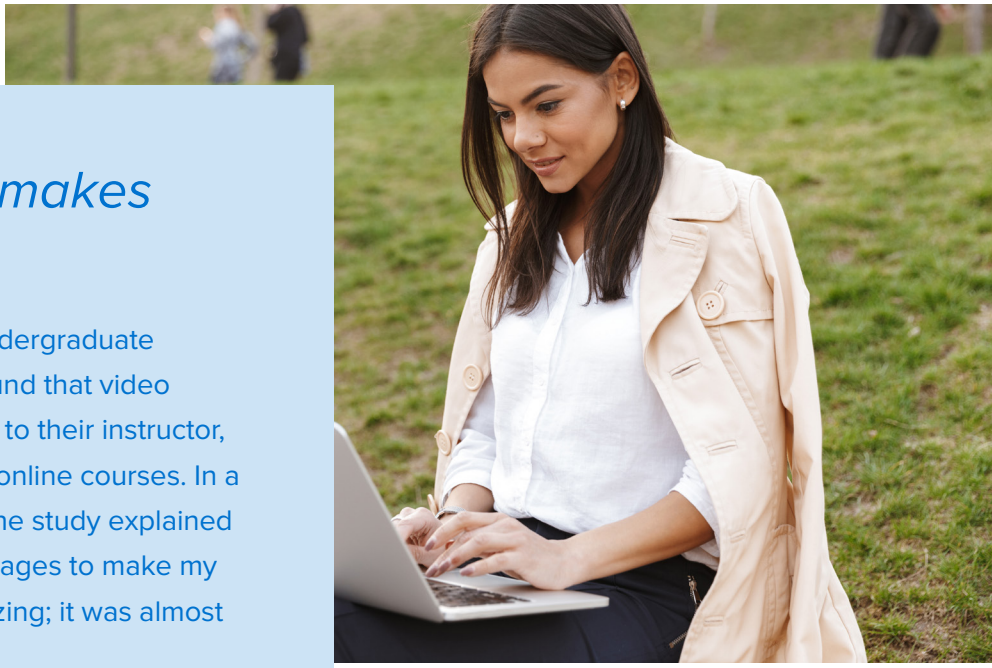
- Syllabus
- Course schedule
- Lab procedures
- Project or report details
- Assignment themes or expectations
- Due dates, timelines, and other course goals

"Students really don't care if I make a mistake, have a bad hair day, or sneeze on video. They want to see me—the real person, not a professional spokesperson. Have you ever noticed that making a silly mistake, telling a dumb joke, or stumbling over a chair in a face-to-face classroom endears you to your students? They see you as a fellow human being, and they love you for it."

— **Tracy Schaelen,** Distance Education Faculty Coordinator, Southwestern College

✓ Assignment and project feedback videos

In addition to sharing core knowledge, your faculty can record feedback on student assignments in a video. This is a personal way to connect with students by giving them individualized, conversation-style feedback.



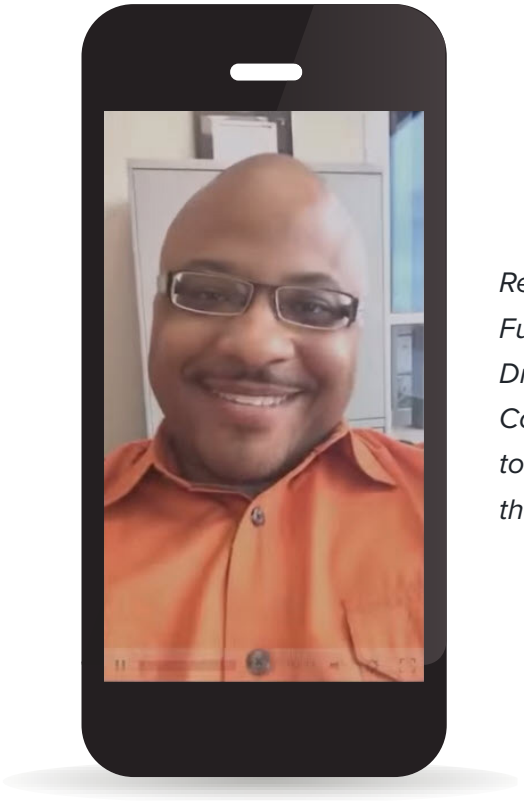
Personalized video makes all the difference

In a survey of 1,085 graduate and undergraduate students, Huss and Eastep (2013) found that video messages help them feel connected to their instructor, and are part of what they look for in online courses. In a typical comment, one student from the study explained how the professor "used video messages to make my first online experience more humanizing; it was almost like being in class on campus."

Students find this method more clear as opposed to deciphering written feedback, and they like the human connection it fosters. Instructors can record a video of themselves explaining notations in a marked-up written essay, narrate their response to a report or practical skills assignment, or walk through how to correctly do a calculus equation.

Convey to faculty that these frequent videos don't have to be scripted, or highly-structured in order to be effective. In fact, the more impromptu they are, the more 'human' they tend to feel to students, and therefore more effective at building a true relationship. "It's hard for someone like me who's Type-A, to let go," explained Entringer. "Sometimes my kids come and knock on my door while I'm trying to record a lecture. It's okay, it's real life. My students appreciate that."

Dr. James Bolton frequently creates and shares in-the-moment video messages with his students at Odessa College. In these quick video clips, he updates them on how things are going and encourages them to do their best.



Recording with the TechSmith Fuse app on his smartphone, Dr. James Bolton of Odessa College captures short videos to encourage his students throughout the term.

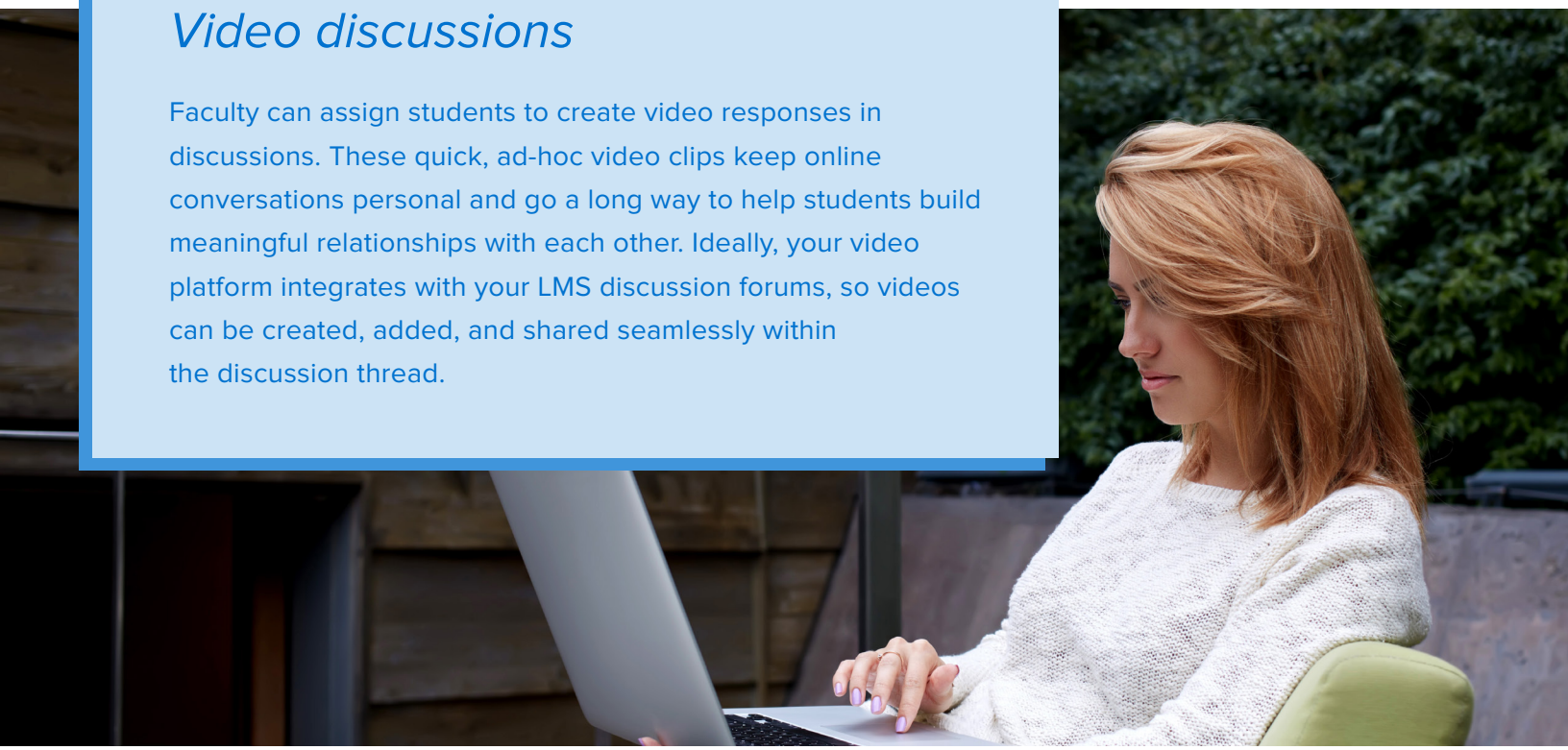
✓ Student-created videos

To create an even more interactive experience, faculty can have students create their own videos as guided assignments. Valuable as an alternative to written text and for hands-on elearning, tasking students to complete video assignments often increases creativity about the subject matter and helps students build their own digital skill-set. Whether it's to create a video essay response on literature, prove a complex theorem, or record a group lab project in a blended learning course, video assignments are often remembered by students as a favorite part of the term.

Faculty can also have students create their own welcome videos, introducing themselves to their instructor and their peers. It's an excellent way to help online students get acquainted with each other. By watching each others' completed videos, students get to know each other and build connections that tend to keep them engaged in the course, for better overall outcomes.

Video discussions

Faculty can assign students to create video responses in discussions. These quick, ad-hoc video clips keep online conversations personal and go a long way to help students build meaningful relationships with each other. Ideally, your video platform integrates with your LMS discussion forums, so videos can be created, added, and shared seamlessly within the discussion thread.



Overall, the above methods are essential to building a relationship between students and instructors. When they hear (and see, via webcam) their instructor frequently and at meaningful times during the course, students feel more open to emailing their instructor when they have a question, or need help. Students feel like there is an authentic relationship, and they 'know' the instructor, which helps boost participation, engagement, and learning.

✓ Be responsive

Lastly, it's hugely important that faculty make it a priority to be reachable and respond quickly to student questions. Huss and Eastep's study of college students found that students expect email responses from their instructors within 12-24 hours.

In addition to email response times, guide faculty to proactively communicate with students weekly or several times per week, turn around assignment feedback as quickly as possible, and share quiz scores and graded items promptly. Being responsive to students helps bridge the gap of distance that separates many online students from instructors, and helps them feel that there is a caring person on the other side of the screen.

Photo courtesy of Boise State University

How to Train Faculty to Create Engaging Core Course Videos

A huge part of engaging online courses are foundational video lectures. Simply assigning PowerPoints, textbook reading, or other written lessons just doesn't work - students don't tend to read them, then, not surprisingly, students flail on exams. In contrast, personalized, custom video lessons are the backbone of quality online and blended courses.

Beyond a best practice, video lessons are considered a standard component of quality online programs. Ragan Chastain, math instructor at Calhoun Community College, has notable experience teaching hybrid and online courses. Chastain notes the necessity of sharing lecture videos with students. "I don't know how people teach hybrid or online courses without some type of lecture recording."

Faculty can record lecture material they already have. They can record anything on their screen, right from their own computer - presentation slides, documents, webpages, or any other materials. Or, they can hand-write equations for calculus, physics, and more, right on their screen, as if they are writing on a blackboard.

✓ Aim for short, concise video lessons

Instead of recording hour-long lectures at the podium, encourage faculty to create shorter video lessons. These mini-lectures are easier for students to comprehend, and keep their attention much better than a full-class-length lecture.

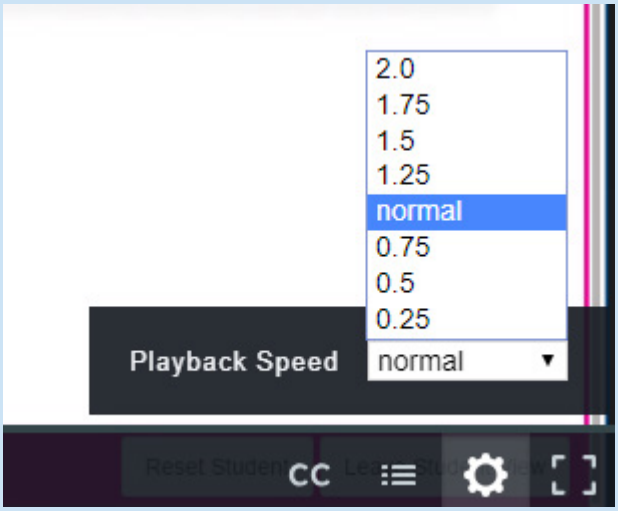
Videos should be relatively short, around ten minutes each (or less, ideally). In the above-mentioned study from MIT and University of Rochester, researchers found that video length influences engagement more than any other factor. They found that shorter videos are best, with the median engagement time of no more than six minutes. This finding agrees with a 2016 study conducted by TechSmith about video viewership, which found that most people prefer videos that are 6 – 15 minutes long.

Shorter videos, playback options aid comprehension

Keeping videos short makes it easier for students to go back and rewatch topics they need to see again, to grasp tough concepts for comprehension and for valuable test preparation.

The latest lecture capture platforms offer variable speed playback, allowing students to watch videos at slower or faster speed than normal. Speeding up videos (1.5x or 2x speed) is often helpful when reviewing for exams. Slowing down video playback (.75 speed or less) can let students better understand instructors who tend to talk quickly, to better understand complex technical terms within a lecture, or to overcome language barriers.

Variable-speed playback can also make video playback more accessible for varying learning styles, and helps give students more control over the viewing experience overall.



Adjustable playback speed, such as provided in TechSmith Relay (pictured above), helps students better review the course material.

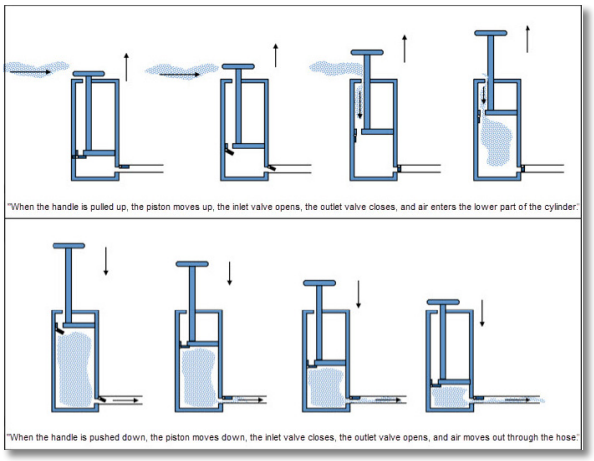
Concise videos make the best use of students' attention, allowing them to better digest content one piece at a time. It's also much easier to go back and re-watch a topic when there are several short videos, as opposed to trying to find the appropriate spot in a longer video.

Direct faculty to talk through each topic as if students are right in front of them. Or, they can consider using a script - write out the main topics they want to cover, so they have structured content as they narrate their lesson. "Lectures are easier because you have a PowerPoint for an outline," explains Entringer. "When I'm doing videos that aren't lecture, I make myself a little outline or template of things I want to say. It's not so I can write out everything or read it word for word, I just want to remember the key points."

Some video recorders can easily integrate with popular programs such as Microsoft PowerPoint, which make it easy to turn a slide presentation into a structured video.

✓ Make the most of video's strength - keep it visual

According to research by Richard E. Mayer, professor of psychology at UC-Santa Barbara, the old adage is true about the worth of a picture - people learn more easily from words and images than from words alone. This is particularly true when images are thoughtfully selected to help process information. Per Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning, they should aim to draw attention to what we need to understand, and omit extraneous data.



In this example from Dr. Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning, it's easy to see why students learn the function of a tire pump much more easily with narration and the above image, as opposed to with words alone.

Direct faculty to:

- Use colorful visuals that help students understand concepts (as opposed to only words, or simple icons) on presentation slides
- Include images, graphs, and diagrams
- Include their face from their webcam (picture-in-picture, or switch back and forth)
- Use presentation slides as a guide (not read them verbatim)
- Let their personality shine through

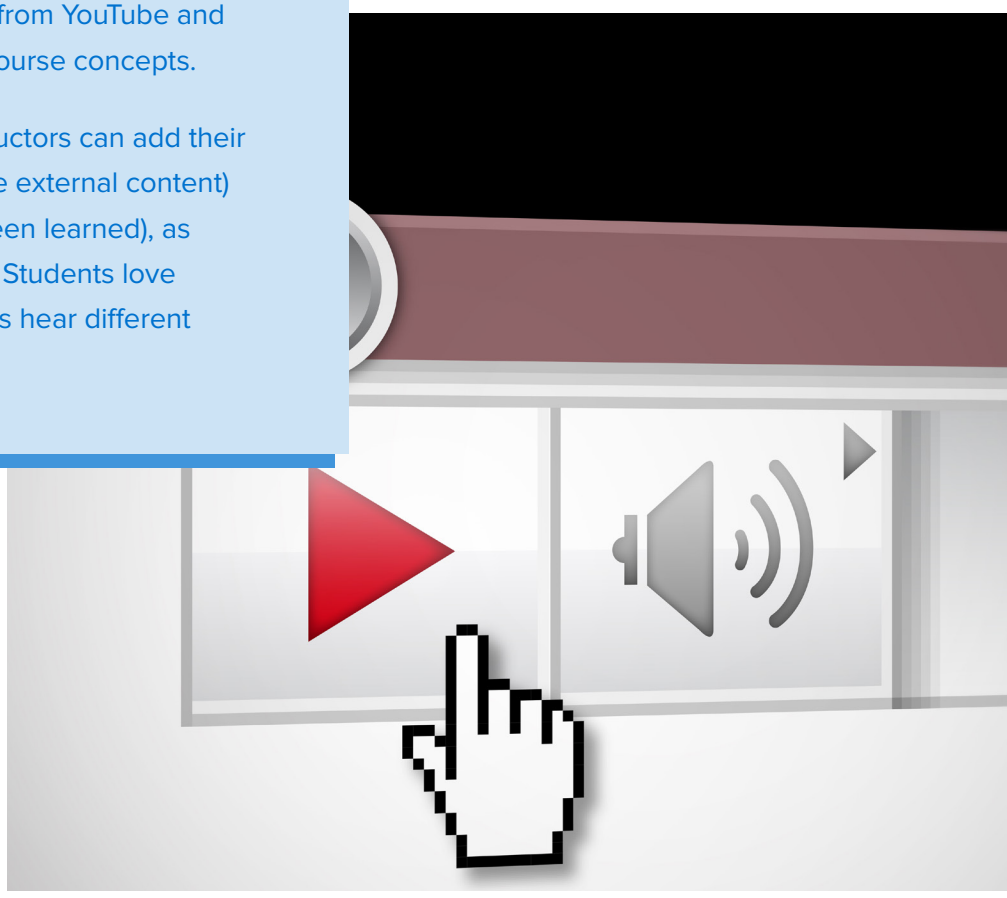
Boise State University employs video lectures to help cover the vast amount of content in their medical courses. Students appreciate the format, especially given the rigorous demands of the program. “Having something that feels like it’s a live lecture that they can access, is really valuable,” remarked Jeff Anderson, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Education, Department of Respiratory Care. “I get a lot of comments from students that they feel like they’re in class.”

Once they get going, you may hear from faculty that they find it fun to create video lessons. They have more control of how their lecture is presented, and can use colorful visual aids to make their points, which are often difficult to use effectively in a big lecture hall. Engaging elements faculty can use in their course videos include music, backgrounds, animations, green screen, and more, to keep students’ attention and make topics easier to learn.

Bring in content from the web

In addition to their own video lessons, faculty can harness educational video content from YouTube and other places to help demonstrate course concepts.

Also known as “bookend-ing,” instructors can add their own introduction clip (to preface the external content) and outro clip (to wrap up what’s been learned), as a supplement to their core lessons. Students love seeing real-world content, as well as hear different perspectives on the topic.



Faculty can record hands-on labs and practicals, too. Using their existing smartphone, tablet, or other mobile device, they can capture labs and practical skills in healthcare, chemistry, culinary, and more, to share with students. Shreves describes how well mobile video works in their online programs because it's technology that instructors always have with them, and are comfortable using. "The faculty who use it, use it heavily. A lot of it shows [practical applications] - firefighters can take a phone out when they're tearing a car apart, or when they're in a clinical environment. The phone is so handy."

Instructors at Mott Community College use the power of video to teach hands-on applications. Health science professor Heidi Clippard uses the TechSmith Fuse app on her smartphone to record and share practical skills with students.

If your faculty only have full-class-length lecture videos for their online courses, consider directing instructors to divide longer lectures into smaller 'chunks', separated by topic. They will often find they're able to cut out unnecessary sections that don't need to be in the final video, such as inaudible small-group discussion breakouts, mid-class break, plus pre- and post-class windup and wind-down. The final result will be more concise and learner-friendly than the original.

Whether they record custom video lessons from scratch or they chunk-up longer lecture recordings, encourage instructors to watch their own videos. They'll often notice aspects of the video progression that they didn't before and find ways to improve, before needing to seek any outside input.

✓ Make room for discussions

In addition to core course lessons and online presence videos, you'll want faculty to include ways to discuss topics with students, and for students to discuss concepts with each other. Discussion boards, forums, and email threads can all work for this. Structure how discussions fit into the online course, so students know the best way to use the online space. Here are a few ways to keep discussions lively:

- Ask open-ended questions that require description (as opposed to questions that can be easily answered with "yes" or "no").
- Challenge students to add their thoughts to group discussions regularly, and consider setting minimums to spark interaction.
- Instead of starting every discussion themselves, faculty can task students to lead discussions.
- Direct students to record video responses to questions, and share them with the class.
- Have faculty use whatever interactive elements are available - chat or messaging apps, live video cams for group discussions, and video commenting.

Carl Weckerle, Online Learning Director at Macomb Community College, is focused on retention and success in online classes. "Social presence is a big area of focus for us, in trying to increase social presence for students interacting with other students and interacting with their faculty," notes Weckerle. "Anything that enhances that idea of social presence, especially for online students, would be beneficial. It's an area of growth for us and I think for online in general, and for community colleges in general."

Regardless of the method, it's imperative that faculty are an active part of class discussion, checking in often, asking meaningful questions, and stirring more discussion. Class discussion is also a key way to measure participation, as will be covered in the next section.

How to Train Faculty to Measure Quality Online Courses

A crucial component to a quality online course is measuring student outcomes. Are students learning? Are they showing up consistently, and watching all of the content? Online courses need a clear way to track participation and comprehension throughout the semester, preferably in enough time to step in if a student needs help.

Trust, but verify

In addition to measuring student learning and outcomes, you'll want to evaluate online courses themselves at the department or college level. Beyond making sure online courses meet your own standards for teaching and engagement, there are several third-party organizations that can check to make sure online programs meet quality guidelines.

Quality Online Learning & Teaching (QOLT), developed by the California State University System

Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI), developed by Illinois Online Network and Illinois Virtual Campus

Quality Matters, developed through a FIPSE grant, provides review and certification of online and blended courses

Community of Inquiry, Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities research project

✓ Participation

Make sure faculty take advantage of stats offered by your video platform that measure which students have watched course videos. If possible, it's great to also know how much of each video students have watched. Guide faculty to track each student individually regarding:

- Who watched each video
- How much they've watched
- When they've watched

Video viewership is a clear way to gauge basic attendance. These analytics are powerful ways to measure ongoing participation, and can be graded as such. Or, faculty can assign grade points for video assignments, making students accountable for watching them in a timely manner.

In her registered nursing course, one of Entringer's students contacted her, asking for help because she was struggling to grasp the course. The student insisted she'd been doing everything possible to learn the material. Thanks to analytics, Entringer was able to see whether or not her student had been watching the videos or not. She hadn't. "If you were taking a face-to-face class would you attend just to take the tests and not attend the lectures?" Her student said 'no.' Entringer explained that was basically what the student was doing. To learn the material, she needed to view the lectures.

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Video views can be early warning signs for struggling students, letting astute faculty jump in and help students early, while there's still time to make a difference. At Odessa College, instructors use data analytics to measure participation, especially in online courses. "If they're not there, we can't teach them," said Robert Rivas, Executive Director of Innovation and Research.

“They can’t learn anything.” Odessa instructors also use viewership data to help identify at-risk students by monitoring their viewing percentages prior to major exams. These analytics are key to identifying students who aren’t participating, early on, with enough time to make a difference. “We need to know when those students are struggling, when they’re not watching a video, or when they blow a quiz in BlackBoard,” said Shreves. “All that data just gives us more information so we can provide a much quicker response.”

Faculty can also keep an eye on viewership of the class as a whole. All these metrics contribute to healthy insight about participation and who’s engaged.

✓ Comprehension

According to Harvard research published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), “Enhancing videos with quizzes improves student engagement, reduces mind-wandering by 50%, increases note-taking by 300%, and improves learning outcomes by 30%.”

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— Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)

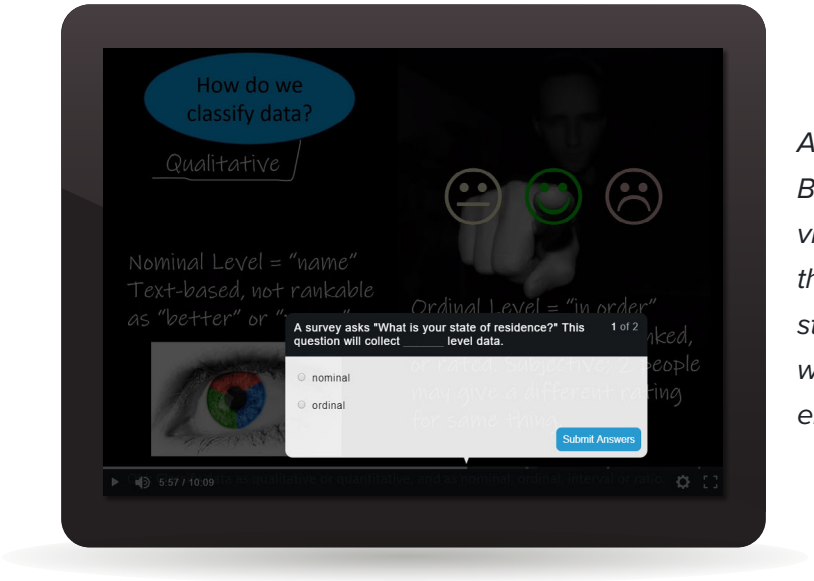
Direct faculty to include quiz questions directly in their video lessons. Have them measure learning early and often. Depending on your particular video platform, scores can go directly into instructors’ LMS gradebook. Quizzes can be formative, summative, qualitative, or quantitative, and can work for any subject or major of study. They can be multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, or open-ended.

When including quizzes, direct faculty to:

- **Embed quiz questions within their videos** (as opposed to include a quiz only at the end), to measure learning at meaningful points in the lesson. Adding quiz questions at key points throughout the video forces students to interact with the video before they can proceed (they can't continue to watch the rest of the video until they have taken the quiz). Not only to measure comprehension, doing this also gives faculty important viewer analytics to gauge participation, to make sure students are actively watching the entire video - they can't just press 'play' and walk away.

- **Ask a mix of choice-type questions and open-ended (essay-type) questions.** This will keep things interesting, can invoke different sides of the brain, and get students more actively involved.

- **Tie grade points to quiz results.** Tracie Lee, Lecturer in the College of Business and Economics at Boise State University, adds quizzes to videos to engage students with interactivity and check for understanding. Notably, she has found that if there are no points associated with a quiz, students won't take it. Instead, she ties quizzes back to their participation/attendance grade. This has proved to be effective in increasing engagement as well as helping her measure comprehension. "Short videos with embedded quiz questions let students interact with the material and get instant feedback on their understanding of a concept," said Tracie."It's amazing how their scores on the video quizzes track how they will do on their exams."



As seen in Tracie Lee's Business Statistics 207 video, interactive quizzes throughout measure student comprehension while increasing engagement in the lesson.

Faculty can do survey/polls at select times during or after each video lesson to see how many students grasp a specific concept, and use that to help strugglers and/or gauge what to cover next time.

They can also task students to create videos for assessment, which faculty can watch at their own convenience. These are especially useful for reviewing and grading hands-on, practical skills in nursing, performing arts, chemistry, and other subjects.

Ideally, your video platform can show faculty both types of metrics in one place - detailed video viewing analytics plus quiz scores. Both metrics together show instructors which students are doing well, which ones are getting by, and which are struggling.

✓ Student Feedback, Perception, and Retention

Encourage faculty to gather feedback early and often on the effectiveness of their online courses. What are they hearing from students? What are the completion rates for the course? Faculty may benefit from asking for student feedback during the following points of the course:

- At the end of each video and/or video lesson (What did you like about this video? What helped you learn the best?)
- At the end of each week, unit, or theme
- Mid-term, or before exam prep
- At the end of each course

The goal is to ask for feedback often, learn from all feedback, and adjust instruction accordingly. Do students like the current lessons, but they want more context? Are there certain topics that tend to be difficult to grasp in a course, year after year? If faculty don't receive a lot of informal feedback, they might consider polling students in a more formal way to get an overall sense of what's working the best.

Make it Accessible

Fundamentally, your LMS and video platform allow you to create and share content that is accessible to students, including accessible navigation, screen-reader-friendly web design, playback, and more. Ideally, you'll also want a creation process that is accessible, too, so that faculty with differing abilities can easily record and share lectures.

When training faculty to create courses, guide them to include:

- **Captions for each video -** These can be translated by a third-party, automatically generated by your video platform, or typed in by hand. If using the latter two methods, you'll want to have faculty double-check that captions are correct, and make any necessary edits. TechSmith Relay has options to assign captioning to internal students or staff, for the benefit of human-captioning without the high expense. An easy-to-use, web-based editor is a huge help to make corrections that are ADA-compliant.
- **Clear titles and descriptions** for course videos, syllabus, written assignments, and other materials. Having titles that are easy to understand helps students using screen readers find relevant material.
- **Verbal descriptions** of anything they are physically showing on video (charts, graphs, medical diagrams, etc.), so that visually-impaired students can learn the concepts.

Assuring online courses meet ADA accessibility not only helps students of different abilities, it can help faculty better reach all learners. Shreves describes the feedback he hears from students about captions. "We've found a lot of students like it because they capture the information better by reading the words vs hearing them," said Shreves. "They've even said that they will turn their audio 'off'."

Captions and written descriptions also help bridge language barriers and help students with different learning styles. "This has to do with how well the student can understand what the instructor is saying," said Shreves. "We have instructors from all over the globe. Sometimes seeing captioning in plain letters makes it more understandable, because you may not pick up a word here and there. When I watch something very intense, when I can get closed captioning on it, I like to see it. It double-whammies me in the brain."

As online and blended learning initiatives become more of an expectation from students looking for flexible degree options, we expect to see more institutions embracing this powerful instructional method and using it to make course content even more powerful.

We hope this ebook has been helpful by sparking ways to train your faculty on the technology needed to create online courses, the course elements needed, and the mindset for building a quality online course that engages students and instructors.

Photo courtesy of Boise State University

About TechSmith

TechSmith's suite of screen capture and video editing tools help you make remarkable content. Communicate clearly, show what you know, and easily share information and knowledge.

The easiest-to-use video platform and lecture capture solution for higher education

TechSmith Relay is one simple, cloud-based solution to easily create, edit, manage, and share educational videos at your college or university. Record classroom lectures, enhance with captions, add webcam and education content from the web, and integrate seamlessly with your LMS to share with students. View powerful analytics to measure learning and include interactive quizzes for engaging online and blended courses.

Powerful video editing

Camtasia lets you easily edit videos with animations, callouts, music, green screen, and more. Include interactive quiz questions and captions, then share directly to Relay for seamless video creation.

Image capture and editing

Create dynamic visuals for instruction with Snagit. Grab screenshots - even scrolling pages - and enhance with words, arrows, shapes, and more. Explain complex concepts with crystal-clear images, and share to Relay.

TechSmith Relay®

The higher education video platform you'll actually use.

Better adoption • Better engagement • Better results

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https://www.techsmith.com/techsmith-relay.html